

*Wm C. Paine*  
SATURDAY, JUNE 17, 1871.

Subject: Suspended Moral Convictions.

# PLYMOUTH PULPIT:

A Weekly Publication

OF

## SERMONS

PREACHED BY

### HENRY WARD BEECHER.



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## SUSPENDED MORAL CONVICTIONS.

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“Nevertheless, among the chief rulers also many believed on him; but because of the Pharisees they did not confess him, lest they should be put out of the synagogue: for they loved the praise of men more than the praise of God.”—JOHN xii., 42, 43.

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THE scene which these words develop took place among the very last days of our Master upon earth before his crucifixion. He had finished his Galilean ministry. In Galilee he spent by far the largest part of the time that he spent upon earth. He had come down, now, to Judæa, and to Jerusalem, to fill up the immortal days of passion; and he stood on the very eve of this great manifestation of divine love and divine power. No one, who has made it his business to look closely into it, will fail to be struck with the deepening and widening of the teachings of the Saviour as time went on. Whether it was simply that, like men, he was growing deeper and wider by practice and years, or whether it was designed that he should emit light in proportion as men were able to receive it, the fact is, unquestionably, that his declarations were higher, broader, and more extraordinary, every week of the last six months of his life. They began, if I may so say, in the hills of Galilee. The river Amazon begins in the mountains, by slender streams, many but confluent; and the river grows until the breadth of it at its mouth is such that from the channel one cannot see the shore on either side; and in the last days of Christ his inspirations outran moral experience, rising higher than any man could follow them, and sinking deeper than that any plummet of human thought could sound them. The very mysticism of John's Gospel consists in this: that it is attempting to orb to us thoughts that are of infinite experience, and that so transcend men's higher experiences that they are impossible to us.

Now, there were many among the Jews—the common people—who heard Jesus gladly, we know. They heard him because they had nothing to risk. They heard him because he accompanied his instructions with works of mercy that won upon their sympathies and



hearts. He was their physician. He also provided largely for their wants. He carried, from first to last, the great mass of the sympathetic common people with him. And there was no period in Christ's teaching and life in which there were not a select part of the Pharisees who believed in him. Some few were willing to own it, but the greater part were not. Toward the close of his life, as he came more and more in contact with the higher orders of the Pharisees that same experience attended him. The great body of them, from party earnestness as well as personal antipathies, rejected Christ's teachings and assumptions. There were some who regarded them; but they were such men as Nicodemus, and Joseph of Arimathea, and others like them—just men; deep-hearted men; men wont to ponder moral questions; men that had soul-hunger; men of genuine religious aspiration; men that could not if they would, and that would not if they could, free themselves from the solemn overshadowing of eternal truths.

While the great multitude of the Pharisees rejected Christ utterly, they vehemently contested him, and sought his destruction. There were here and there many men that believed. And the question is, Why did they not openly espouse his cause and give strength to it? We have been accustomed to take sides with Christ. His cause has been adopted by us, and we are almost partisans for Christianity. We take sides against everybody who took sides against Christ in the old times.

In one sense this is right. In another sense we shall not touch the bottom of things unless we can by sympathy and dramatic interpretation put ourselves among those that stood outside of the charmed circle, and look at Christ as they did, and reason on their conduct from what we know of the great motives that actuate the average of human conduct. It certainly was a great moral weakness, to use the mildest term, on the part of those of the Pharisaic body who believed in Christ, not openly to avow their faith in him. But we must not suppose that they were so very bad, measured according to our estimate of good or bad among men. They were rulers of the synagogue; and they were the "chief rulers," it is said. That is, they were men that stood among the very highest of the officers of the synagogue. The Temple could exist only in one place—namely, in Jerusalem; and the Temple never provided instruction for the people, but simply sacrificial worship. That was its solitary function. The synagogue provided instruction, but never sacrifice. Synagogues existed in every considerable neighborhood; and there were a great many of them in old Jerusalem. I suppose the synagogue was substantially the model upon which the

apostles early framed the Christian church; and I suppose that the early officers of the Christian church occupied substantially the same positions and performed substantially the same functions which the apostles had been accustomed to in their synagogical experiences.

Our Master availed himself of the synagogues every Sabbath day. He, as we now say, attended church at the synagogue. He became a teacher. Frequently intelligent men were called out of the audience to read the Scriptures and to expound them; and he often performed this service; and thus he became not only familiar with the usages of the synagogue, but with the principal characters of the synagogues throughout the country. These rulers were among the most honored men of that time. To be an elder or a ruler in the synagogue, and a chief one at that, was to go nearly as high as an ordinary Jew could aspire to go in the ranks of his own countrymen.

Now, we must not judge of the conduct of the men who occupied that official relation to the synagogue, by our views of Christ. We have never had any doubt in respect to his divinity, for the most part. From our childhood we have seen him, not as a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief, but as glorified. A halo hangs in our imagination round about his head when we think of him; and he is the openly-declared, and by ages honored, Christ. But he came among his countrymen born in the most inconspicuous circumstances, trained among the poorest of the people, and without the advantages of education which belonged to the higher classes. He came in ways that tended to shock many of the prejudices of his own people. He was an extremist, judging purely by external measurements. He came as a reformer, uttering disagreeable truths that jarred against the conceit and the vanity and much of the patriotic feeling of the Jews. And he stirred up their vindictive and malign passions—for they were strong in that direction. He came apparently disowned by the leaders of his people. Yet he represented historic Judaism. He was in accord with Moses and the Mosaic institutes. Nevertheless, he was a disturber. And when men in official relations looked at him, he seemed to them an extraordinary man. But they did not know how he would turn out, or which way he would go. And it was very natural that, being guided by their lower nature, they should hold themselves in reserve—particularly as Jesus had formed no external church as separate from the Jewish church. It is a striking fact that he never gathered about him, and never organized, any band of men. Even the disciples were not organized. There was no order, no rank, no



precedence, among them. They were simply twelve companions united in a common cause, as twelve men gathered casually together by elective affinity would go on a journey of days and days, not organized, but loosely co-hering by their sympathies. There was no organized church, nor *any* church, in Christ's time. There was no preparation for a future external, visible kingdom. There was no plan of organization laid down. There was no mode of worship prescribed. Christ was a pure spiritualist. He taught men the innermost truths. He almost may be said to have neglected the external forms which truths must put on. He left the externalities of religion to take care of themselves. Where any inward thought tended to give itself an outward form, he let it do so according to its own nature. He dealt with principles, with truths, with great spiritual elements. And it is not strange that men should not like to commit themselves to a man who represented nothing but an intangible and ill-apprehended spiritual tendency—especially as he was in such disrepute. The state of feeling was such in regard to Christ, that it would have brought them into collision, and perhaps into quarrel, with those of their own class who had *esprit de corps*, if they had identified themselves with him. The spirit of their class was such that these men were slow to break away from them for the sake of adhering to Christ. It would have put in jeopardy their peace, their harmony, their property and their reputation.

There was another thing. Probably they were men who were tired of disquiet. All their days there had been revolutions breaking out incessantly in one shape or another. Wild hopes that the Messiah had come would start the people now and then, in this direction or in that direction ; and they had been stirred up so much that doubtless then, as now, there were many thoughtful and cautious men who were tired of these perpetual disturbances, and these pretentious reformations, that ended in nothing.

To this must also be added that disposition which many men have, not to be in any doubtful or uncompleted development. There are some men who love the front line, who love novelty, and who run after things that are different from what has been known before. There are other men who are the reverse in their tendencies. They love the rear line because it is safest. There are men who naturally run to action. There are other men who are naturally spectators of action. There are men who tend to *do* ; and there are other men who tend to *think*. Without doubt many of these men were of a reflective cast of mind, who did not love to commit themselves.

So, then, when you look at it from the standpoint of human ex-

perience, they did not act in any extraordinary manner—not differently from what men are acting every day. And I think before I am through you will detect in yourselves the same lines of reasoning; the same conservative tendencies; the same gulf between moral intuitions and the development of them into overt life, and into declarations before men.

Theirs was a case of suspended moral consciousness. They saw Christ perform his works of mercy, and believed in them. They heard his discourses, and felt the truth and the power of them. In the main, they thought it most probable, almost certain, that he was a man sent from God. And if they could have been disconnected from all the circumstances around about them, and could have felt at liberty, as men say, to act according to their own private feelings without regard to their social connections, I have no doubt that they would have ranged themselves on the side of Jesus, and rejoiced to have been his disciples. They saw, they sympathized, they believed; but they stood still. They did not allow their moral convictions to issue, either in personal conduct, or in declarations of belief; so that the effect which was wrought by the truth upon their minds never came to fruit—at any rate, never during his life-time. It was held in suspense. It was not permitted to go through its natural and proper evolutions.

The same causes are producing the same effects still. There are multitudes of men who do not allow their best feelings and their best nature to develop to the full. They keep their heart in suspense. Their moral consciousness is far more clearly developed on the right side than their life is. Multitudes of men are worse than their seeming; multitudes also are far better than their seeming; that is to say, their interior consciousness is more orthodox, their interior desires are more nearly spiritual, their secret aspirations and ambitions point far higher, than you would suspect from anything that you see outwardly.

There are men who are more or less a-preaching of the Gospel; who look upon society not with a careless eye; who have deep natures; whose outward characters are an index of the work that is going on in them; though after all they hold back from forming definite convictions, they hide themselves from the truth. There are men also who, though they do not hide themselves from the truth, hide themselves from the results to which the truth ought to lead them. Both of these classes we shall consider briefly.

Some men have a sensitive and interpreting conscience; and this has, as all moral sentiments have, a kind of prophecy in it.



All strong moral feelings have a sort of moral prescience. They foresee, in a dim, nebulous way. Therefore it was said by our Saviour, "Men love darkness rather than light, because their deeds are evil." Men have a kind of consciousness that if they were to accept certain truths, those truths would compel them to forsake certain pleasures; but they think that there would be such an inconsistency between their practical course and their inward feelings that they could not endure it; and they are not prepared to change their course. They are under full sail; they think that their outward success lies in the direction in which they are going; they are in the tide of power; and they have a consciousness that if they were to yield to what they see to be right they would lose the aims and ambitions of their life; and they are not prepared to take that step. They know that if they were to open their minds to the full illumination of the truth, it would bring them into such controversy with themselves that they could not endure it. Such men will not let the truth come to them. There are hundreds of men who say within themselves, "If I ever should become a Christian, I know I should live very differently from what I do now." Oftentimes their humility leads them to say, "I should live much better than other Christians around about me are living." There is no telling how men would live if they were Christians. You can only tell how they have lived after they have become Christians. Living a Christian life is no easy task—especially for those who have been long in the indulgence of wrong courses.

So it is that thousands of men who do not reject the teachings of Christians; who are not opposed to the church; who are in favor of morality; who revere the memory of their parents because they were pious people; and who believe in much that they hear, and feel much that belongs to the truth—so it is that thousands of such men are perpetually holding themselves in suspense. They will not permit themselves to come to any clear and definite apprehension of truth as it is related to their character. Nothing is more common than to see men who are utterly godless shed tears at hymns. Men who are living very wicked lives will read the prophecies, will read the sublime passages of Scripture in respect to God's moral sublimity, and it will be like music to them. Frequently men will hear preaching, who do not expect it will bring them to a practical decision. What they want is, that it shall play on those deeper chords which vibrate in them. And they have so much of moral nature held in abeyance, in suspense, that it is grateful to them to have that moral nature played upon by poetry and eloquence, only so that it does



not bring them to a decision, to a clear, decided conviction as to the way of duty, and prepare them for revolution in the way of conduct. Up to that point they believe in truth, and love to think about it; and sometimes they say to themselves, "I wonder if I am as bad a man as I have supposed that I was, and as I am told that I am? I like hymns; I like to read the Bible; I do read it more than folks think I do; and it may be, after all, that when I die I shall wake up and see how good I was on earth." Many men have times of this misty soliloquy with themselves.

It is one thing to have an ethical sensibility, and it is another thing to have practical moral piety. It is one thing to have a nature that rejoices in the excitement of moral appeals. It is another thing to bring those moral appeals to bear upon your dispositions, upon your ruling purposes in life, and upon your conduct. It is moral sentiment *applied* that makes a Christian man; and the mere susceptibility to moral subjects does not indicate that you are good, nor that you are not bad. A man may love to have hymns poured over him, as if they were sweet perfume; a man may love sermons; a man may love all things in the church that are sober and temperate; a man may love to indulge in deep thoughts and feelings, so that they do not come to the point of decision; so that they do not break him off from courses that he does not mean to break off from—a man may do all this, and there may be no operative and practical results in his case. I do not say that this is worse than nothing. I say that it is not sufficient. I say that it is a crude and undeveloped state of moral sensibility. I say that it is not enough to save a man. It will not ripen him. It is not bad. It is good. It is much better than nothing. It should be cherished. You ought to be glad for so much. The time will come, it may be, when all these impressions and sensibilities will result in decisions that will bring you to a consistent, practical development of Christian life; but at present they are inchoate. They are not developed and brought into action. They come short of what is necessary to make you a Christian. Yours is a case of suspended animation, or semi-consciousness. You are in a half sensitive state of conscience, or moral feeling. You purposely hold your convictions in subjection. You will not let them come to light. You know what the truth is, and what it requires; but you will not decide to act in accordance with it, because you know, as well as though it had been told you, that if you were to come to such a decision, you would have to change your life; and you do not want to change it.

For example: I am shaving notes for a living; and I am making a good thing of it. I am convinced that it is not right. I know that

it is hardening my heart. I know that it is searing my conscience. I know that I am coming to look on men very much as vultures look on birds, only with the thought to eat them. I know that I am not cultivating toward them a spirit of kind sympathy, and sweet pity, and loving helpfulness, and cheerful willingness to suffer in their behalf. I know, on the contrary, that I am growing rich on other men's misfortunes. Nobody comes to my shambles who is not in trouble; and when a man comes to me in trouble, I gauge the amount which I will exact of him by the degree of his trouble. The first time he comes he will allow twenty-five per cent.; the next time thirty-three per cent.; and, perhaps, as a last resort, he will go as high as fifty per cent.; and I try him there. Every time he comes back he makes up his mind to go a figure higher. He does it to-day, he does it to-morrow, he keeps doing it; and I watch him, and take advantage of his misfortunes as they come on him.

This is legal; it is perfectly right so far as the law is concerned: the only mischief in it is, that it kills at both ends—at the breech and at the muzzle. A man under such circumstances is not only taking the life-blood out of his victim, but is at the same time taking the blood of humanity out of his own spirit and soul. He is being killed dead. And yet he will not change his course. He is conscious that he has feelings which would rise up and lead him in a different direction; but he is not willing to be guided by them, and so he suppresses them. There is a great deal of buried manhood in him; and frequently the old bitter spirit comes up; the conviction of his wrong conduct forces itself upon him; a chance visit to the sanctuary brings him to himself; and he says, "I cannot go to this church and keep on in the way that I am traveling. I must either leave this church or leave my business. I cannot take both. So I will not go to church." Thus he reasons. He foresees that if he gives himself up to what he believes to be true, that if he permits himself to be influenced by those thoughts and feelings which tend to liberalize a man, to sweeten his disposition, and to plant love where selfishness grows, he will be obliged to forego this most profitable occupation. And he says, "What should I do then?" Men stand over against their moral convictions, and say, "I know that this business is wrong; but if I should give it up, what would become of my wife and children?" A man ought to think that the very poorest benefit that he can confer upon his wife and children is to make them outwardly rich and inwardly disgraced by a course which he would not like to talk about, or have them talk about.

Then the next natural step in a mind that is not utterly perverted, is where conviction has been allowed to take hold, and has



become active, and where there has been a process of suspending moral consciousness between a conviction of the truth and the appropriate development of that conviction into outward action. Here is a very large class of persons—and a great many of them are parishioners of mine—who are clearly settled in their judgments in respect to the truth, but who hang back and hesitate, and do not make themselves known as Christians. And I wish to address a few words to them. I am not preaching a sermon purely of criticism. I am preaching a sermon of sympathy just as well. I would be glad to enter into your feelings, and show you how your mind is working, and why it is that you are not out and out, open, declared Christian men. Very many of you are ripe in believing. You only need to let your belief begin to take hold on action. Then you will be in the right way.

There are men who go for months and for years with a moral sense far in advance of anything which they allow to appear in their active life. There are men who have thoughts which they never speak, but which roll as deep as the tides of the sea. There are men who pray to God, and whose prayers I believe are acceptable, but who do not tell the dearest friend they have on earth that there is a channel of supply open between the Throne and their needy souls. There are men who are conscious of their delinquencies, who are conscious of their weaknesses and their wickednesses, who are humbled within themselves, who confess their faults before God, who ponder these things, who live in the shadow of the life to come, and who inwardly experience something of spirituality, but who never say, "I know that I am unworthy; I know that I am sinful; I know that it is the grace of God that is helping me." There are men who really do believe that their souls are pardoned, who really believe that at the foot of the cross they have felt the cleansing blood of atonement, who really believe that Jesus Christ is related intimately to them, but who do not avow his name, and are not anywhere known as his children. They wear the crown immortal; but it casts out no light; and no one knows that they wear it.

Now, why should there be men who come to a conviction of the truth, and of its moral bearings, and stand still? Why should men be like many of the chief rulers of the synagogue, who believed in Christ, but would not confess him? Why should there be so many who believe in the divinity and power of the Lord Jesus Christ, but who will not acknowledge him?

There are many who I suppose are kept back from an open avowal of the Lord Jesus Christ by motives which are mistaken, but which are not so unworthy or so disgraceful. There are many

who are kept back, I verily believe, by an exceedingly sensitive conscience, acting in directions of false doctrine or false information. There are, for instance, persons who think that a Christian life is a thing so different from what it really is, that it would be a falsity for them to say, "I am a Christian." Their education has led them to believe that no man is a Christian who has not been brought into the kingdom of God with an outbreaking, impetuous experience.

There are certain kinds of goods that men will not buy unless they have a given trade-mark. They look for that, and if they find it they will buy the goods; and if they cannot find it they will not buy them. And many persons think that Christian experience has a trade-mark, which consists in first being plunged down into darkness, and then bolted up into the light, and with such vivid impressiveness that one can almost remember, by the clock, the minute and the second when the event took place.

A man says, "Such a person, when he was converted, was at first swept like a meteor into a gulf of despair, and then shot like a comet into the realm of hope and peace and comfort; but I never had any experience like that; and why should I say that I am a Christian?" And so men's consciences stand in their way. They cannot profess to be Christians because they have not gone through the process which they suppose to be indispensable to a genuine conversion.

Yet, if you look at the history of those who followed the Lord Jesus Christ; if you look at the history of the apostles and others who became Christ's disciples, you shall find that for the most part they had no such out-breaking and up-breaking experiences as those to which I have alluded. They came under the influence of the Saviour, and into personal affiliation with him and with his work, in an even quiet way, without any exact recognition of the time when the change was wrought.

Where one is brought into the Christian life tumultuously, and there are precise marks which may be thus noted, I do not undervalue them. I do not say that persons who are converted in an uproarious way are not truly converted. But I do say that persons who have a sense of truth, who have an aspiration for that which is right, and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, however gentle their experience may be, have a right to call themselves Christ's disciples, and have a right to live openly the life which they are endeavoring to live secretly.

Nothing is more illusive, and nothing is more difficult to manage, than a conscience illuminated by ideality, or imagination, as some would call it—that faculty or power in us by which we dis-



cern invisible things, and by which our conceptions are raised, lifted, carried up, beautified, glorified. An idealized conscience is always raising the conception of duty. It is always raising the standard of right. It is always magnifying things so that when men look upon the best of their thoughts and feelings, and measure them by an idealized standard, the difference is so wide between what they are and what they ought to be, that they say in themselves, "It would be presumption in me to pretend that I am a Christian."

A painter who had lived in the provinces, and who had acquired some little reputation in his own neighborhood, and had never seen a master's picture, went to Rome, and stood before the works of Titian and Raphael. He gazed at them long and silently, and at last he said, "*I, too, am a painter.*" There is a whole history in that. He had been painting where he could not compare himself with anybody else; and now his feeling of aspiration led him to say this, as he looked upon the works of acknowledged artists. It was not inconsistent with humility. He felt that the artist talent was in him, too, and that if he could not equal those pictures, he could approach toward them. And he said, "If those men are artists, then I am an artist. It may be that I am at the bottom of the scale; but I have some of *the same thing* in me which there is in them."

And so there are men who have in them impulses that are powerfully drawing them upward; they have an honorable ambition; they have spiritual etherealizations; their sense of duty is transcendently high; and oh! that they might at last look upon Christ Jesus in such a way that they should see in themselves something of him, here and there, and be able to say, "Well, I am Christ's man—a very poor one, a very imperfect one, but nevertheless his."

There are many persons kept back from an open Christian life for months and years, and sometimes during their whole lives, who say, "How can I go into the Church, and profess my faith in that long and intricate scheme of doctrines? I cannot." "Oh! but," people say to them, "it is not understood that you profess these things. They are for the ministers." "Yet, they say, it is generally understood that the members assent to them, and people will think that I believe them when I do not; and I cannot give my assent to such doctrines. I am profoundly conscious of the sinfulness of my nature; I am profoundly conscious of my need of grace and love and salvation in Jesus Christ; and I am willing to live according to his wish; I would be willing to say that much, but I cannot go beyond that."

Brethren, the church of the Lord Jesus Christ ought to be so largely made, it ought to be organized in such a way, that any soul that wants to follow Christ can, without violating its letter or its spirit, come in and say, "I am Christ's for life and death." The church ought not to be burdened with such doctrines and dogmas and complicated governments that men should be compelled to stand outside of it all their life long, saying, "I desire to follow Christ, but I dare not take upon myself the avowal of such a ritual of beliefs as the church prescribes." Following Christ is a life-work, and not at first a philosophical work—though that may come afterward.

There are many who wish to live Christianly, but who do not wish to be held responsible according to the Christian standard. There are a great many who look at the way in which church-members live, and criticise them severely (a thing which is not very amiable), saying, "I endeavor in every part of my life to conform to Christian morals; I try to govern my tongue; I try to control my temper; I try to conduct my business according to the best light that I can get; I try to regulate my life as I think a Christian man ought to; and I try to bring my children up after the highest model." I say to them, Why not add to that, "Christ is my model, and I live by faith of the Son of God," for the comfort of those around about you? They say, "I do not feel that I could take on myself the open responsibility." These are men that make secret marriages with Christ.

There have been princes who, for reasons of State, did not dare to openly follow their real affection, but secretly married themselves to the women whom their hearts loved. They entered into the marriage relation, but never avowed it. They wanted the comfort of heart which came from that relation, but they kept it secret, because they did not want to stand before the State and be condemned as having formed a *mésalliance*.

There are many who want to have a secret alliance with the Lord Jesus Christ; who want to have all the sympathy and succor ing benedictions which come from faith in him; but who do not want to avow it openly, because they do not choose to stand before men committed to all that Christianity is popularly supposed to imply. Sometimes men give this a better name than I do; but where men are living, or trying to live, a Christian life, I think they ought honestly to say, "I am living this life, so far as I am living it at all, by the faith and help of the Son of God."

Then there are many who are kept back from following their convictions of duty, and living an open life of Christian faith, by affection—not affection to God, but affection to their friends. There



is many a loving woman who is secretly living a Christian life, but who is waiting before she makes an avowal of her faith, until she can bring her husband with her. There is many a woman who is full of prayer, and full of faith, and full of the purest Christian virtues, but all of whose household—her father, her mother, her brothers and sisters—all with whom she stands connected—are opposed to her. And her heart is rent. She cannot endure to separate herself from them as she feels that she will be obliged to if she publicly joins herself to the people of God. It would require a great deal of heroism for one thus situated to do it. I can conceive of one who has been brought up shrinkingly, exquisitely sensitive, who has formed unfortunate alliances, and who has twined her heart about those who do not sympathize with her in her religious aspirations, and finds it hard to rise up and break away from them all, and make known to the world that she is Christ's, engaging actively and earnestly in duties which separate between them and her. This is indeed taking up the cross. There are many that could die with fewer pangs than they could live and let it be known that they were Christians. And yet Christ says, "He that will not confess me before men I will not confess before God."

"If you do not love me enough to have it known," a suitor might well say, "then you do not love me enough to have me." And Christ says in substance, "If you do not love me enough to take me first, and in preference to all other things, then your love is not a fit mate for mine." And yet, many persons are held back from an open and devout Christian life by the sweetest affections, but affections that are drawing the wrong way.

There are many sympathetic natures that take their shape and direction in life very much from those who are around them—men that are not only to be blamed, but also much to be pitied.

If you stand a bar of iron in heat like that of yesterday or to-day, it expands, but not to a degree that will be appreciable to the senses. If, however, you put alongside of it a thermometer, how the expanding mercury goes driving up the tube! How marked and apparent are the changes which take place in the mercury! During the night, the iron bar contracts again; but the contraction is so gradual and so small that no one can see it. The mercury in the thermometer, on the other hand, goes down, and goes down in such a way that everybody who looks on can see that it moves.

Now, all persons who are converted are affected. Some are as sensitive to influences that are brought to bear upon them as the thermometer is to heat and cold; and they rise and fall all the time. They are constantly warped and biased. As the musical instrument

is played upon by the hand of the musician, so they are played upon and hindered by sympathetic influences. They would, if, fortunately for them there was any current setting toward the confession of their faith, be swept on by it; but if it were necessary for them to go forth alone, as often as they stepped out they would be drawn back again. If their purpose is fresh in the morning, it dies before evening. If on the Sabbath day they are persuaded, before the week is passed they are unpersuaded. Their heart is like a bay of the sea, into which the tide runs, and out of which it runs again, alternately, forever vacillating, forever changing.

To these must be added those who are affected by the love of praise, the instinct of self-interest, and those ten thousand social influences which interfere with the clarity of a man's judgment, the wisdom of his purposes, and the simplicity of his self-devotion. All these elements are working on men, and holding them back, so that there are hundreds and thousands who stand for years without having that royal Name associated with them—men who are not far from the kingdom of God, and who are secretly attempting to live a Christian life.

There are in this congregation a great many men of that kind—men whose convictions need nothing; men whose judgments are sufficiently clear; men whose hearts are on the side of the truth and of the Christian church, but who have not openly espoused the cause of the Lord Jesus Christ. There are many times in which they accept the Saviour; there are many times when they commune with Jesus; there are many times when they are conscious of having Christian experiences; but they do not rise up, and come out boldly, and put their names on the roll of Christ's followers, and range themselves under his banner, and own him as the Captain of their salvation.

In view of this exposition, I remark, first, that there are many persons who have a large treasure, a vast mine of wealth, within them, of which they are themselves scarcely conscious, and which they certainly never improve to any such extent as it might be improved. I think that now there are many persons out of the church who are as good or better than many that are in it. I think there are many persons who do not believe themselves Christians, who are better than many who do believe themselves Christians. And I think they are culpable for their indiscreet conservatism. The character of their inward experience indicates that they are living a life of faith; and frequently they stand much higher in their Christian attainments than many who are ostentatiously Christians. Now it is their business to let the source of those attainments be known.



There are many men in whose souls is a spark of the divine nature; but they never bring it out and let it shine. It lies hidden away in them, and nobody except themselves knows that it is there. There are many men deep down in whose natures, under all their manifold imperfections, is a point and center of palpitating love and faith; and oh, that they would uncover it and let the light of God's countenance illumine it! There are many persons who are living Christian lives under difficult circumstances, who ought to come out and say, "I am a Christian, and I wish to join the company of those who are going to heaven."

One of the most favorite pears in the market is the *Duchesse d'Angoulême*, which was a wilding and grew in a hedge, and was a hedge plant, until one day the proprietor, going to visit his provincial farm, saw the fruit, and tasted it, and was delighted with it. So he determined to transplant it; and he cleared away the hedge, took it up, carried it into his garden, and cultivated it. The result was that it became almost the pear of the world. And it was fitting that, instead of being allowed to bloom and bear its luscious fruit in obscurity, it should have been brought into the garden where it could be seen, and where its fruit could be enjoyed.

I think there are magnificent fruit-trees growing in hedges yet, which might well be taken out and put where there is a better soil and a better exposure, so that they might spread their branches unchecked by surrounding growths. There are many persons in society who have gone under the influence of secondary and lower feelings so long, that there has a kind of crust formed over their real character, which hides it. There are people of all degrees and classes of goodness and badness, but nobody is perfect. And among these there is a very large class whose outside is bad, and whose inside is good. Like chestnuts, they are hard to deal with, but are excellent when they are out of the burr. There are many persons whose external life, whose practical life, whose life in the school in which they have been brought up, and in the career which they have followed, is justly damnable, but in whom, after all, there are sweet dispositions, and who really are actuated by an internal sense of honor and manliness. These better traits have not been discovered, and brought out and developed; but they are in them. And if there could be some influence brought to bear upon them which should lead them to break through the outer crust which envelops them; if that could be brought out which lies slumbering in them; if their moral consciousness, where their true manhood resides, could be brought into vigorous exercise, they would be transformed almost in the twinkling of an eye.

I believe that among bad men (and there are a great many bad men) there are not a few that have the capacity of being very good, if somebody would take them by the hand, and say to them, "You are carrying immortal treasures in you, but a little below the surface; and if God's grace could but set on fire your better nature which lies hidden beneath an unlovely exterior, it would give forth a light which would guide you to the very land of immortality."

Are there not some here who swear, and are careless about the Sabbath, and are not altogether particular about their companions, but who find themselves bound by rigorous conceptions of personal honor and personal duty, of truth and fidelity, and who, in the hour of trial, when sickness comes into the neighborhood, are ready to lay down their life for the sake of others, and who cannot endure to see persons persecuted, and will stand between the victim and his oppressor, and will go out of their way to help a disciple of Christ? I believe there are many men who seem externally bad, but who are internally good. I believe that in many men whom we call bad, there is an intrinsic nature which, if it could be touched by the fire of heavenly love, would consume all this outwardness which stands in the way of their higher development, so that they would come out into the blessedness of a Christian life.

Are there not some in this congregation who are wearing the steel armor of the world, but who carry inside a great heart, a tender conscience, a real contempt for shams, and intense longings for righteousness? Are there not men before me who wish they were Christians, and who long for the kingdom of God, although they know that they are in the kingdom of Satan?

To such I speak to-day. You believe in the Lord Jesus Christ. Carry your belief into action. Profess his name. Range yourselves with his followers.

Finally, I think there are many persons who, for want of openness and publicity, for want of declaration, for want of freedom and active exercise in a Christian life, are losing not only the best developments of Christian feeling in themselves, but their best opportunities to pay honor to Him whose name is above every name.

"It is more blessed to give than to receive." It is very pleasant, when a man has done well, to have some one whom he honors tell him so; and yet there is something which is sweeter than that. When you have been beholden to a man; when a man has written things that it has done you good to read; when you are consciously lifted into a life of greater purity and manliness and usefulness by some teacher or friend, to be able to express your obligation to your benefactor is, I think, one of the most grateful of all experiences.

I never see Dr. Lieber of New York that I do not want to go and take him by the hand, and say, "I thank you." I read his books when I was a boy, and they laid the foundation for half that I know in respect to political economy—though unfortunately that is not much. I never see him that I do not have a grateful sense of what I owe him. I would go to Europe to express my thanks to some men. I would go, a pilgrim, to Europe, if I might help some men who are in the rigor of poverty, but who deserve better things in the world than others who are rolling in wealth.

And how should we feel toward the Lord Jesus Christ who has created summer about us? *Jesus*, the name above every name, has cheered us, inspired our hope, and been our guide through this stormy life; and how ought we to feel in respect to him? Is it right to receive everything from Christ, and then to hide your honor and your praise of him? Is it right to have every part of your life blessed by the love of Christ, and never say one word of that love to men? Fathers, mothers, brothers, sisters, is it right for you to feel that there is a golden cord of hope that runs from your heart up to the throne of God, and yet be unwilling to be known as the lovers and the trusters of the blessed Saviour?

I beseech of you, if there be those who love Christ, who believe in him, do not linger any longer. Rise up, overleap the barriers, come forth, and say, "I am the Lord's, and he is mine." Be glad that men look upon you and say, "He is a Christian"; and then live so that men shall honor Him whose life in you is being developed day by day.



## PRAYER BEFORE THE SERMON.

We are glad to be brought home again. We are glad for this day of rest that separates between cares and troubles, and gives us hours of sweet release in which we can look upward and look backward and look forward and behold thy providence, and thine own self, and ourselves, in the light of the better world. We thank thee for all the hope that we have of immortality. We thank thee that the care of life, and its rudest experiences, are softened by the thought of that life which is to come. If we triumph here, how glorious shall be our rest there! If now we are pressed by the battle, and seem approaching to defeat, we know that they that are for us are more and mightier than they that are against us, and that by faith we shall overcome even the last enemy, Death. Yea; when in the hour that heart and flesh shall fail, we are despoiled, and carried away captive, and hidden from the sight of men, and corruption seems to have triumphed—then, in the hour of earthly defeat, we still shall be conquerors, and more than conquerors, through Him that loved us. In that hope of the future lies the joy of our present. All that is sweet and pleasant in life, and belongs to it, and in no wise takes hold of thee and of the life to come, is perishable. All earthly fountains which give us drink leave thirst with each drinking; and all earthly food only prepares the way for another and a higher kind of food. From thine hand comes the water of life that quenches thirst; and from thee comes that bread which satisfies hunger forevermore. And in the hope of that glorious life, and its banquet; in the hope of that blessed meeting where all infirmity is gone, and all possibility of evil is ended, and all are united again that are separated on earth, and all inequalities are rounded up into a glorious perfectness of divine nature—in the hope of the life to come, how easy it is to bear the drudgeries of this life, and all its chafes, and its fevers, and its cares, and its burdens! It is thou that by these hopes dost quicken us, to endure our present ill, in the certainty that out of it shall come blessings innumerable—joys from tears; and songs from sighs; and victory from defeat; and rest from labor; and everlasting life from death itself. To thee, O Lord Jesus! we owe these precious promises and hopes. And to thee, this morning, we give ascriptions of praise. Every knee doth bow, and every tongue doth confess that thou art Lord to the glory of God the Father.

And now we beseech of thee that thou wilt work in every heart, this morning. According to thine own sovereign pleasure, out of thy goodness and mercy, and according to thy wisdom and thine insight, do for us that which we need. We pray for strength, and we pray for all those graces of the Spirit by which we are to live. And we pray that we may have ministered to us, to-day, such views of truth as shall quicken us in the duties of life.

And draw near to those that need thee this morning. By the exercise of thy providence thou art training thy people, and art not explaining the reason of what thou art doing. Thou art saying to them, "Ye know not now what I do, but ye shall know hereafter." We would remit to the disclosure of the hereafter the mystery of the present life, rather than spend our time in seeking to find out God, who cannot be found out to perfection.

We pray, O God, that thou wilt draw near to those on whom thou hast laid thy hand. Let them feel that it is God, and that his touch is full of kindness and of mercy even when it brings pain.

Be near to those that are in great sorrows and afflictions, and comfort them. Be near to any that feel themselves left alone. Be near to those whose burdens seem greater than they can bear, and whose hearts from day to day are full of poignant suffering. Lord, we pray that thou wilt guide

them, and that thou wilt give them so grateful a sense of thy presence, and of thy sure providence in them and upon them, that they may rest. Oh! may there be many hearts that to-day shall do as children do who flee from the face of those that hurt them, and with wild outcry of alarm rush to their parents, and hide themselves in their bosom, and forget their troubles and fears and tears. Open thine arms for the oppressed ones. Let thy heart be a refuge for thy people to-day; and out of cares, out of fear, out of anguish, out of bereavements, and out of the oppressions of this world, may they be able to flee and find rest in the arms and in the bosom of their God.

And we beseech of thee that thou wilt awaken in hearts so rescued and released a more gracious faith in thee; a more abiding confidence in thy presence, and in thine helpfulness. Grant, we pray thee, that it may be easier, from the things which they have suffered, and from the things which they have experienced in release from suffering, to trust God in days to come. How often shall we tread the same road, fearing, and rescued, only to fear again! When, at last, shall we run to cast our care on thee, and not take it back again? When shall we know the peace that passeth all understanding, which God gives, and which the world cannot take away? Bring into this secret experience of thine own life the lives of thy dear people to-day. And bless to them the memories of the past. Sanctify to them the manifold experiences of their lives. And may they be able to-day, in the fullness of their trust in God, to look upon all that is dearest to them, and say. Thy will, O Lord, be done.

Grant, we pray thee, that all who have come this morning with hearts full of love and gratitude for unexpected favors, for gracious deliverances, for mercies in over measure, of which they are tenderly conscious, may have access to thee, that they may pour out their thanksgiving and praise, and that they may feel that God is in them and over them, and that he rejoices in the joy of his people.

And we pray for any that are to-day strangers among us. We beseech of thee that by the Holy Ghost their hearts may grow into such communion with God and his people that they shall have found here a home for the soul. May the house of God be to them a very place of rest.

We pray that thou wilt go with the thoughts of those who wander after their beloved; who are separated from those that are dearest to them on earth. Some search for their beloved upon the seas. Grant that a blessing may come upon all those that are on the great waters. Some search for their loved ones afar off in other lands. Grant that thy blessing may be swifter than their thoughts. Some seek for their own in distant parts of our own land. And some mourn when they think of those who are separated from them in evil ways, and with wicked companions. And we pray that thy mercies may go forth in answer to their supplication to-day. Oh that the cries of parents for their children might be heard; and that the tears and prayers of children for their parents might bring them together in blessed union in Christ Jesus! Oh, that those who are separated from each other might see eye to eye again, and hands clasp hands in inseparable friendships! Oh! that those who are burdened, and who are walking in a trying way, might to-day put shoulder to shoulder, and heart to heart, and stand in the fullness of the blessings of the Lord Jesus Christ!

And so we pray that this may be a house of deliverance; a house of blessing; a house of joy, to-day. And be thou in the midst of thy people, to make this day a jubilee to them. And we pray that those who are standing apart, and looking on wistfully, and marveling what these experiences mean, may hear the voice of God calling to them. Are they not also children of the Lord? Are not they, too, to be sanctified by the precious blood of Jesus Christ? Oh, that all to-day might realize their portion in Christ;

that all might rise up and go home. Though they be sinful; though they are not able yet to break off from their sins by their own strength, may they cry out to thee. As supplicants by the wayside, desiring to be healed of their blindness, called, and called again to thee, and would not be stopped by those that rebuked them, so may thy afflicted ones cry out unto thee. And so do thou stand and command them to come. And wilt thou touch their eyes that they may see. And seeing, may they behold thee.

We pray for all those who are in our midst laboring for the young, and for the wandering, and for the neglected. We pray for all classes and conditions of men. May they work with more love and more patience and more and more wisdom, and with the fullness of the blessing of the Spirit of God.

We pray for all our land. We pray for all the churches that are established therein. We pray for all schools and academies and colleges. We pray that they may send forth a light that shall drive away darkness and superstition. We pray for the neglected, for the ignorant, for those that are struggling toward newly created manhood. May they be found, and helped, and raised to the estate and the blessedness of Christian manhood.

Look upon the nations of the earth. Behold their sufferings. Behold how men rise up against men, and nation against nation, and are dashed together as the waves of the sea. When shall the storms of human passion cease? Oh, when shall come those days of promised deliverance, those days of justice and of truth and of love, which have been so long predicted in thy word, but which hang like the stars afar off, shining, but giving no warmth. Lord Jesus, bless the nations. Pity them, and let blood cease to flow. Draw back thine hand in which the cup of mixture is. Oh! let the day of thy wrath cease. Put up thy sword, most merciful One, and ride forth in peace upon all the earth. And let the kingdoms of this world become, at last, the kingdoms of our Lord Jesus Christ.

And to the Father, the Son, and the Spirit, shall be praises evermore.  
*Amen.*

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### PRAYER AFTER THE SERMON.

Our Father, we pray that thou wilt make us more courageous of things that are right, and more fearful of things that are wrong. Help us to live more for the things invisible, and less for the noisy world that obtrudes itself every day upon our senses. Help us to be faithful in this world. And since we are in the body, and upon this solid earth, and must know the experiences that belong to human nature, which thou thyself didst meet, grant that we may be faithful in all our duties one toward another; in all our duties toward the State; in all our duties toward our business and toward things that shall perish in the using. Oh! suffer us not to be led into captivity by this outward life. May there be powers within and upon every one that shall hold him in restraint. May there be a divine influence that shall keep bright our hope, our faith, our love, and our aspirations. May we live inwardly for God and for Christ. And so may we live that, at last, when the body shall unclasp, that when at last those things which bind us and confine us shall fall away, we may blossom, and all heaven rejoice in the fragrance of that love which Christ hath brought to the soul. And to thy name shall be the praise forever and forever. *Amen.*



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
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

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